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CO-OPERATION AMONG AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT:

THE EXPANDED FELLOWSHIPS AND TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR AFRICA

1. Background

The first Conference of Ministers responsible for human resources planning, development and utilization, held, during 5-7 October 1981, urged member States to step up their contributions in supporting ECA's expanded training and fellowship programme both materially and financially. In addition, an appeal was made to the existing institutions in member States to communicate to ECA, on regular basis, information on their training capabilities and fields in which fellowships could be made available to nationals of other African countries. ECA was again mandated to serve as co-ordinator of, and a clearing-house for information on training facilities and was urged to intensity its efforts in mobilizing resources and fellowships to support the programme.

Efforts to implement these decisions have been constrained by a number of problems, including the lack of adequate financing and fellowship offers. Despite these, some progress was made. However, with a little more commitment and active participation on the part of member States, The objectives of achieving greater self-reliance in the field of training could be greatly enhanced. The objective of this paper is to review the programme content, progress, achievements and constraints and to suggest, for appropriate consideration, the action that is required if the Conference decisions, and indeed the objectives of the Lagos Plan of Action, are to be implemented more effectively.

2. Programme Design and Objectives

In response to the decisions of the Conferences a broader Programme was designed to specifically:

(a) Develop and operate substantially enlarged training and fellowship activities directly related to the critical manpower requirements of member States in priority development sectors and projects;

(b) Maximize the use of existing post-secondary and other specialized educational and training facilities in the region by fostering technical co-operation among African States in manpower training;

(c) Strengthen existing African institutions through staff development and co-operation in developing specialized courses;

(d) Promote the establishment of multinational training and research programmes and institutions in disciplines and skill areas in which the region lacks adequate local training facilities;

(e) Provide seed money from the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development for the purpose of mobilizing additional resources from African and non-African sources for financing training; and

(f) Use non-African training and fellowship opportunities for specialized advanced training of Africans in priority skill areas.

In addition to specifying the above objectives, several areas of manpower development needs in member States were identified as priority areas. Included in these are the following:

(a) Manpower for the basic industries and agriculture;

(b) Graduate training in specialized disciplines;

(c) Training in science, engineering and technology;

(d) Training of teachers and instructors;

(e) Group training of African technical and managerial executives;

(f) Training in budget and financial management and tax administration;

(g) In-plant or practical training in the management of public enterprises and development projects for nationals of the least developed and newly independent African countries; and

(h) Training in solar energy

3. Action initiated by ECA

ECA has initiated and executed the following activities in relation to the fellowship and training programme:

(a) Formal communications were sent to all member States to bring the programme to their attention; seek their active support for it as donors and users; and to request that they should indicate their specific training needs in relation to the priority training fields outlined in the accompanying project document. Member States were also requested to provide concrete support to the programme in the form of both cash grants and fellowship offers;

(b) Formal invitations were issued to several non-African Governments, bilateral organizations and foundations in both developed and developing countries to participate in the programme and promote African collective self-reliance through manpower training;

(c) Three field missions aimed at explaining the programme, identifying changing critical manpower needs and soliciting support for the implementation of the programme were undertaken;

(d) Specific project proposals were developed and sent to potential donors for consideration and action.

4. Action initiated by member States

Three activities can be singled out as major contributions initiated by member States in addition to the on-going national efforts. These are:

(i) The new commitment towards the programme by the francophone member States in the last two years. A staff Development Officers workshop hosted by the Republic of Benin was held with Zaire, Togo, Gabon, Algeria and Congo participating. Also, a training workshop on management and accountancy was held in the Congo involving Zaire, Algeria and the host country.

(ii) Egypt, Morocco and Libya offered a number of fellowship for the training of African nationals in their institutions. Other national institutions have expressed their willingness to do likewise.

(iii) The willingness of some member States to participate in a joint fellowship programme which allows for national governments to bear the travel cost of national recipients of awarded fellowships.

5. Summary of achievement

Despite major constraints, the programme has made some modest accomplishments. In considering these, it would be appropriate to review them under two programme categories:

(a) Funded Programmes

It is to be acknowledged in this note that the Secretariat has received and managed some amounts of funded arrangements - the Netherlands grants, the UNTFAD, and some amounts offered by two countries, one being outside Africa.

(b) Non-Funded Fellowships

This aspect of the fellowship programme is the older of the two. It consists of fellowships in kind. Country "A" offers a number of places through ECA to African countries. While for the funded programmes the Secretariat acts as Manager, for this item it acts as a clearing-house, by announcing the programmes, receiving applications, screening them sending them to appropriate donors and communicating the outcome to the applicants and/or their sponsors.

Under the two programmes, an average of about 200 persons have been trained annually both in groups and individually. The current Donor List is composed of 21 countries of which only 3 are African.

Proposal for Action

Hitherto all requests for fellowships have been forwarded to Governments and offers for the intra-African programme have all been made by them. The proposals contained in this note are intended to test the willingness of the institutions themselves to show proof of their readiness to co-operate in intra-African human resources development; to assist in easing demands on each other's overstretched resources; and to extend a helping hand to the needy Africans.

The following are being proposed:

1. Fellowships

(i) Vice-Chancellors, Presidents and Rectors may wish to secure resources from their governments or elsewhere during the biennium 1985-1987, to provide fellowships for the education and training of Africans in their respective institutions for a total of at least 500 students from all over the continent. Priority fields of study are:

(a) Engineering

- Mechanical
- Electrical
- Agricultural
- Electro-mechanical
- Hydrology

(b) Agriculture

- Agronomy
- Horticulture
- Animal husbandry
- Veterinary medicine

(c) Science

- Physical
- Natural
- Biological

(d) Administration and management

(ii) The awards should be for at least one academic year and should cover full tuition, board, lodging and stipend. Transportation costs will be met by the recipient of the award.

(iii) ECA will provide administrative backstopping, act as the focal point for receiving offers, identifying candidates, monitoring placement, evaluating and reporting results to the next Conference of Vice-Chancellors, Presidents and Rectors of Institutions of Higher Learning.

2. Student Exchange

(i) Institutions may wish to consider modalities intensifying the intra-African student exchange programme. Here again, ECA will act as the clearing house for the programme, receiving requests and arranging placement

(ii) Sending institutions will be responsible for all travel costs whilst receiving institutions will meet the cost of tuition, board, lodging and stipend

(iii) ECA will monitor the programme and evaluate results for reporting to the next Conference.

3. Staff Exchange

(i) A staff exchange programme may be launched, and operated on lines similar to the student exchange programme. Sending institutions will take responsibility for transportation costs of the staff member while receiving institutions will pay salaries, provide local transportation, accommodation, etc.

(ii) ECA will provide administrative support, monitor the programme and report to the next Conference.